
JACK CONWAY (17 July 1887, Graceland, MN—11 October 1952, Pacific Palisades, Ca.) directed about 100 films, most of them unnotable. Three of the better known are *The Hucksters* (1947), *Saratoga* (1937), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1935). His first was *Her Indian Hero* (1912).

JOHNNY WEISSMULLER. 2 June 1904, Freidorf, Banat, Austrian Empire [now Romania]—20 January 1984, Acupulco (stroke). Starred in 12 Tarzan films. IMDB bio: “Johnny Weissmuller was educated the University of Chicago. A sickly child, he took up swimming on the advice of a doctor. He became a six-three 190 pound champion athlete: undefeated winner of five Olympic gold medals, 67 world and 52 national titles, holder of every freestyle record from 100 yards to the half-mile. In his first picture, *Glorifying the American Girl* (1929), he appeared as an Adonis clad only in a figleaf.... Cyril Hume working on the adaptation of *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932), noticed Weissmuller swimming in the pool at his hotel and suggested him for the part of Tarzan. Weissmuller was under contract with BVD to model underwear and swimsuits; MGM got him released by agreeing to pose many of its female stars in BVD swimsuits. They billed him as ‘the only man in Hollywood who's natural in the flesh and can act without clothes’ *Tarzan the Ape Man* (1932) was an immediate boxoffice and critical hit. Seeing he was popular with girls, the studio told him to divorce his wife and paid her $10,000 to agree with it. After 1942 MGM had
used up its options; it dropped Tarzan and Weissmuller who then moved to RKO and made six more Tarzans. After
that he made sixteen programmed Jungle Jim (1948) movies for Columbia, finally retiring from movies to private
businesses in Fort Lauderdale FL.” There’s a story that when he was buried, a recording of his Tarzan yell was played
as the coffin was lowered into the ground.

MAUREEN O’SULLIVAN. 17 May 1911. Boyle, County Roscommon, Ireland—23 June 1998, Scottsdale, AZ (heart
attack). Bio from Leonard Maltin’s Movie Encyclopedia: “This adorable Irish colleen was discovered by American
director Frank Borzage at a Dublin horse show shortly after coming out of a convent school, and starred for him in
the John McCormack vehicle Song o’ My Heart (1930). A few years later she was signed by MGM, where she spent
the bulk of her screen career playing virginal ingenues, and had substantial secondary roles in such classics as David
Copperfield, Anna Karenina (both 1935) and Pride and Prejudice (1940), not to mention The Marx Brothers’ A Day
at the Races (1937). She is best remembered, however, as Jane, the mate of jungle lord Tarzan, a role she first played
with Johnny Weissmuller in Tarzan, the Ape Man (1932) and then reprised five more times, evolving in terms of
costume (from preProduction Code scanties to a modified Mother Hubbard) and role (becoming stepmother to Boy).
She left the screen for several years in 1942 to raise a family with her husband, director John Farrow. O’Sullivan
returned to films as Ray Milland’s wife in Farrow’s taut thriller The Big Clock (1948), and landed some more
interesting parts in the 1950s. She was also a cohost of the “Today” show on television in 1963. Infrequently seen on
the big screen over the last three decades, she has taken a few colorful supporting roles, most notably in Hannah and
Her Sisters (1986), a Woody Allen film that costarred her daughter Mia Farrow.

from 5001 Nights at the Movies: A Guide from A to Z. Pauline Kael

Tarzan and His Mate (1934)—Johnny Weismuller and Maureen O’Sullivan in the carefully prepared follow-up to the
1932 hit, Tarzan, the Ape Man. It’s cheerful and outrageously preposterous. You are right in the heart of the craziest
Africa ever conceived for your entertainment; no wild beast ever misses a cue. Tarzan’s mate has adapted herself to
her husband’s mode of living with true Victorian propriety; snug in her tree houses, she has a devoted gorilla for her
personal maid. Everything is idyllic, though some old Mayfair friends of hers turn up and make trouble for a while....

Carl F. Macek, Magill’s American Film Guide v. 5. Edited by Frank N. Magill

The character of Tarzan, Edgar Rice Burroughs’ famed lord of the jungle, has been a screen personality since
1918. Through numerous actors from Elmo Lincoln to Ron Ely, the noble jungle lord has been portrayed by
an army of ex-athletes and body-builders. However, to a great many people the actor who most epitomized
Tarzan was Olympic champion swimmer Johnny Weismuller. So completely did he capture the public’s
imagination as Tarzan that he played the role through twelve feature films spanning a twelve-year period. In
film after film Weismuller would rise to the occasion as hero supreme, an embodiment of strength, courage,
and virtue on the purest level.

Tarzan, the Ape Man was a first not only because of Weismuller’s portrayal of Tarzan, but also because it introduced the lord of the jungle to the “talking cinema.” This spectacular 1932 M-G-M production was the first sound version of Burrough’s famed creation.

...In the beginning of the film, Tarzan comes upon a safari headed by James Parker (C. Aubrey)

The authenticity of the jungle scenes depicted in Tarzan, the Ape Man is easy to explain. The film
was directed by Willard van Dyke, who had served in the same capacity a year earlier on the epic adventure
film, Trader Horn. That film, starring Harry Carey, was the first to be shot entirely on location in Africa. Tarzan, the Ape Man utilized out-takes from Van
Dyke’s earlier film and blended them with remarkable skill to match the Hollywood sets constructed for his
new motion picture. Weismuller did many of his own stunts in the film. Although his acting may seem stiff
at times during Tarzan, the Ape Man, Weismuller appeared totally natural swimming through rivers
teeming with crocodiles or wrestling with huge jungle cats.

The sequel to Weismuller’s first film is
When Burroughs wrote *Tarzan of the Apes*, he was thirty-six years old, married with two young children, and living in Chicago, the city of his birth. He was a sturdy though not especially imposing man, roughly five feet nine inches tall, with strong arms and hands. Far from living a life of rugged individualism, he worked in a minor position, giving professional advice to clients for *System*, “The Magazine of Business.” “I knew little or nothing about business,” Burroughs later recalled, “had failed in every enterprise I had ever attempted and could not have given valuable advice to a peanut vendor.” . . .

Burroughs thus wrote *Tarzan* as an act of self-liberation. He hoped to cast off the humiliations of a frustrated, insignificant white-collar worker for the independence of a commercial author with a mass readership. But more than a means of merely making money, the story, he hoped, would serve as an imaginative escape for himself and his readers. After he had become one of the most widely read (if never the highest paid) writers of his day, he made this point explicit. Speaking of the appeal of the Tarzan stories, he declared:

We wish to escape not alone the narrow confines of city streets for the freedom of the wilderness, but the restrictions of man made laws, and the inhibitions society has placed upon us. We like to picture ourselves as roaming free, the lords of ourselves and of our world; in other words, we would each like to be Tarzan. At least I would; I admit it.

**Tarzan** was the exemplary fictitious feral child of Burrough’s and his readers’ time—as he has remained for the ninety years since.

The story appeals powerfully to the fantasy of a reunion with the natural world and hence with one’s authentic self.

Burroughs intended *Tarzan of the Apes* as a romantic adventure story, not as a formal meditation on civilization and its discontents. Nevertheless, his tale gave powerful narrative force to a widespread sense that modern technological civilization created restrictions, frustrations, ordinariness that entailed special losses for men. Like Wister and London, Theodore Roosevelt and Frederick Jackson Turner in his own times, and like earlier American writers such as James Fenimore Cooper, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Herman Melville, Burroughs celebrated untamed masculine individualism. More particularly, he created in *Tarzan* a figure who embodied the enduring impulse, in Emerson’s words, to “enjoy an original relation to the universe,” to raw nature, with all its primal anarchic force. The desire for unmediated contact with nature and occasions to
test oneself against it constitutes an overriding element of American masculine identity. It is hardly surprising that in the early twentieth century, when an increasingly impersonal, bureaucratic, and corporate society dominated the everyday life of individual citizens, that desire flared with new brightness and new heat.

What is more problematic in Burrough’s story and in the works of many of his contemporaries is that this assertion of masculine wildness is often explicitly tied to whiteness. Earlier writers were hardly free from bigotry, but to a notable extent writers such as Emerson and Thoreau at least tried to put their affirmations of individual wildness in the service of democratic inclusiveness and against systems of oppression, of which slavery was the most glaring and hateful. In Burrough’s _Tarzan_ as in Wister’s _The Virginian_, however, all men are not created equal. True, Tarzan does not depend on outward hereditary privilege; indeed, the book ends with his refusing to claim his title and estate. As a self-made man, he could appeal to many readers. Yet Burroughs, in line with the predominant thought of influential whites of his time, believed that Tarzan carries his most valuable hereditary privilege, his innate superiority, in his very blood. He could be strengthened rather than degraded by the wild precisely because he holds the best of Western civilization within him. Others less favored by heredity, such as the African natives and atavistic crew members, in Burroughs’s eyes do not.

If for Burroughs and his readers wildness enhanced white Anglo-Saxons but debased black Africans, it also enhanced masculinity—but not, in the same way, femininity. Tarzan’s murmured statement to Jane in the story’s concluding pages, “I am still a wild beast at heart,” is as much a reassurance as a warning. His wildness is the basis of his virility, power and authority, and for him to become truly civilized. To lock himself within the “iron cage” of modern capitalist society, would be tantamount to emasculation. With Jane, it is another story. Burroughs allows her to submit to her awakened primal passions only in fleeting and fantastic moments. Perhaps he senses that to make her as wild as Tarzan would be to replace her teasing oscillation between submission and resistance with an independent sexuality less acceptable to his readers and, perhaps, to himself. The metamorphosis that accompanied moving between civilization and the wild remained, above all, a masculine performance.

A succession of film versions powered the Tarzan machine, beginning with the release of the first _Tarzan of the Apes_ in January 1918. With a coordinated publicity campaign of film distribution, newspaper serialization, and book sales, the movie proved one of the most profitable in the history of the nascent industry, and sales of Burroughs’s books soared. . .

For a quarter century, from 1914 to 1939, Burroughs turned out a new Tarzan book virtually every year. In failing health, he produced his last in 1947, three years before his death. During his lifetime he also published eleven Martian adventures, four stories set on Venus, six “Pellucidar” tales taking place within Earth, several Westerns, and numerous other works. “I want to be known as Edgar Rice Burroughs the author, not Edgar Rice Burroughs the author of _Tarzan,_” he declared, but he never truly got his wish.